

Environment Commission Retreat Notes

January 17, 2015

Commissioners Present: John Becker, Scott Clausen, Alicia Hosmer, Amanda Matheny, Clark Reed, Lea Rosenbohm and Steve Sprague

Commissioners Absent: Steve Cardon

Guests:

Mark Charles, Facilitator and Chief of Environmental Management

Helen Triolo: Interested Resident and Perspective Commissioner

Stephanie Riddick: Interested Resident

Purposes of the Environment Commission

- Support and advise the Mayor and Council on environmental and sustainability subjects.
- Serve as a liaison between the City and the residents across the City re environmental and sustainability issues.
- Support and assist City staff.
- Push the envelop/Encourage the City to take on a leadership role in the region.

Planned or Current Commission Projects and Assigned Committees

- Stream Clean ups in Maryvale Creek Segment (Watershed Protection)
- Encourage the City facilities to incorporate stormwater demonstration projects (Watershed Protection)
- Promote the City RainScapes program (Watershed Protection)
- Watts Branch Watershed Assessment (Watershed Protection)
- Promote the adopt a stream program (Watershed Protection)
- In scoping, neighborhood explanation and implementation of the Upper Watts Brach CIP Restoration Project (Watershed Protection)
- Encourage the City facilities to incorporate stormwater demonstration projects (Watershed Protection)
- Encourage the City to take a position on fracking in the City or State (Watershed Protection)
- Sponsor 2015 “Battle of City Buildings” to achieve more energy efficiency (Sustainable Design)
- Support Local legislation to allow backyard hens (Sustainable Design)
- Participate in the formulation and adoption of the Rockville Pike Land Use Plan (Sustainable Design)
- Promote City energy efficiency performance (Sustainable Design)
- Promote the bulk or discounted purchase of residential solar PV systems via COG contractor (Sustainable Design)
- Curb air emissions to the extent possible (Sustainable Design)
- Pursue local legislation to establish PACE funding for commercial building energy efficiency upgrades (Sustainable Design)
- Evaluate the revisions to the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan (Sustainable Design)
- Organize a solar competition between City neighborhoods (Sustainable Design)
- Support adding solar facilities to City properties (Sustainable Design)
- Encourage the City to purchase Green or alternative fuel vehicles (Sustainable Design)

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- Support proposed Community solar legislation (Sustainable Design)
- Participate in the formulation and adoption of the bicycle master plan (Sustainable Design)
- Promote residential recycling in the community (Outreach)
- Pursue local legislation banning Styrofoam packaging products (Outreach)
- Amend the solid waste ordinance to address recycling and carts (Outreach)
- Determine recipients of Environmental Awards (Outreach)
- Sponsor a recycling poster initiative with City's after school program kids (Outreach)
- Arrange for an environmentally themed movie to be shown during Hometown Holidays (Outreach)
- Encourage the City to pursue organic composting when an opportunity presents itself (Outreach)
- Rebuild social media presence and capability (Outreach)
- Maintain City's Sustainable Maryland Certification from U of Maryland (All)
- Participate in Hometown Holidays (All)
- Conduct Outreach at Rockville Science Days (All)
- Participate in Transition Town to boost sustainability (All)
- Participate in semi-annual Multi-City Boards and Commission meetings (All)
- Encourage Recreation and Parks to relocate the Saturday Farmers Markets to the Town Center area (?)
- Seek a ban on the use of certain pesticides that harm bee populations (?)
- Integrate Multi-family dwellings into City Sustainability and Environmental programs (John B.)

Problems

- Too many tasks to focus on.
- Too much overlapping subject matter jurisdiction and not enough shared involvement.
- Some tasks to not have an obvious home (Committee).

Options Considered

- Abolish all committees and address projects and issues as a Committee of the Whole
- Assign Commissioners to a specific task when it calls for addition research and writing.

Pros and Cons of Having Committees

Pros

- Gets more work done.
- Commission meetings are not conducive to working sessions.
- Allows for volunteers beyond the Commission.
- Allows volunteers to focus on areas of expertise.

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- Create predictable meeting schedule.
- Committees are training ground for potential Commissioners.
- Committees are less formal than Commission and more accessible to residents.

Cons

- Staff is unable to support Committees..
- Subject matter jurisdiction confines Committee activities.
- Communication between Commission and its Committees is not always effective.
- Not enough feedback and direction between the Commission and its Committees
- Committees are not publishing agenda and minutes of their meetings
- Only 3 Commissioners sit on each Committee

Committee Structure Improvements

- All future committee meetings need published agendas and meeting minutes.
- Committees and Commission may need more formal rules of procedure.
- Committee work needs more defined handoffs from and to the Commission.
- Each Committee should prepare proposals for Commission endorsement.
- Detailed Committee reports should be a routine feature of Commission meetings with longer discussions of new/proposed projects and initiative when they begin and when they are ready to go to City staff, residents and businesses.
- Commission minutes need to be generated on an earlier schedule.

Solutions

- Retain the Watershed Protection Committee.
- Eliminate the Outreach Committee.
- Form a Recycling, Composting and Solid Waste Management Committee.
- Split subject matter in Sustainable Design and Energy into separate Sustainability and Energy Committees.
- Consequently the Commission will maintain 4 standing committees in the future. All tasks not captured by this committee structure will be assigned on an ad hoc basis by the Commission.

Action: Commissioner Becker moved and Commissioner Rosenbohm seconded a motion effecting the above changes. The motion was adopted 7-0-0.

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More Specifics

- At the February 5 Commission Meeting, assign at least two Commissioners to each of the four committees. Commissioners will serve as interim chairs.
- At February Committee meetings, select chairs and vice chairs. Submit names and contact info to Environmental Management for posting on the website.
- Ensure advance agendas and meeting minutes are submitted to Environmental Management for posting on the web.
- Committees will also do a better job tracking progress on projects and keeping both the Commission and Environmental Management informed.
- Committees are asked to develop and submit to Environmental Management and the Commission a 12 month work plan in March.
- A social media lead will also be identified at the February 5 meeting.